



Observatory of World Agricultures

How to Represent and Document the Transformations of Agricultures and their Contribution to Sustainable Development?

Beijing, IAAE Conference August 16th, 2009 - Pre-Conference Workshop # 2:

Rural restructuring and the difficult ways of specialization or diversification



Three hypothesis to build a renewed perspective on Agricultures



1. The rapidly changing patterns of agricultural organization. Hypothesis: changes in reality are faster than the representations that are available to handle them (at different levels including academics' research and policy making)
2. The fact that Agriculture is not an island but is strongly connected to other global issues (see the commercial debate). The hypothesis relies on the low capacity of conventional performance criteria to take into account the inter sector dimensions of agriculture.
3. The disconnection between the “observed stakeholders” and the end users of the information produced for policy making: farmers' organizations, civil servants, public officer in international organizations..



The issue of representation

- Represent “farmers” or the “different ways Agriculture is organized” at the beginning of XXI century and their on going transformations
- Paradoxical situation: family agriculture is the most widespread way of organizing food production but do we have the right tools to represent it and the way it changes?
 - Full time family farmers: trend to become minority?
 - Trend to increase the size of farms
- lead to focus (as a priority to start) the research on a specific type of farming: entrepreneurial agriculture, farming with hired labor...to capture the continuity and overlapping of categories



The issue of performance

1. Agricultures

- (i) Nearly 40% of the world population relies on agriculture: the nexus demography, food security, employment and poverty
- (ii) Taking into account the global environmental challenges (climatic change among others) natural resource management through agriculture is a key strategic concern for the planet
- (iii) These concerns are generally viewed in a segmented way

2. Agriculture and “modernization” process of developed world 1945-2000 no longer viable

3. Need to develop integrated approaches to assess the viability of productive processes

- Economic social environmental dimensions together with governance [and policy] issues
- Produce knowledge on the dynamics : permanent update of the changes
- Consequences / effects of the transformations on the global challenges



The information system issue

1. How to document the current transformations of the Agricultures ?
2. How to do it with the involvement of the stakeholders subject of the “observation process”?
3. We assume that this process will have an impact on policy making (“better policy making”), but it will need a specific investigation to document it

Principles

1. Use all the available information systems
2. But define a specific data base drawing on existing information
3. Define a common “Rules and regulations principles” to work (access, utilization of information...)
4. Sharing of existing tools and among the different Observatories



The global issue

- ❑ **Viability of agricultural and food systems**
 - ❑ What are the drivers of the viability and the drivers of changes in the production systems ? How do they work ?
 - ❑ What are the effects / consequences of these changes on the global challenges faced by the planet collectively?

Basic principles of the Observatory of World Agricultures



- A mechanism to continuously document dynamics of change
- Evidence of the diversity of agricultures and their performances regarding global issues
- Gather the international expertise to produce key knowledge for different publics
- An international evolutionary tool to exchange, to debate and help public decision-making



Milestones

- **An International Scientific Committee: two sessions Feb 2008 and March 2009**
- **An international workshop (April 2008, Montpellier)**
- **A pilot project with 5 sites**
- **What research contribution to support the process? A research project funded by Cirad to support the pilot sites and produce tools and methods**



International Workshop

- **Main result: validation of the initiative and mandate to deepen the consultation (Concept Note)**

- **An initial investment from Cirad and French Ministries to be relayed by donors : IFAD, AFD...**

- **To adapt the proposed design**
 - built up with all stakeholders
 - with an international governance by multi-stakeholders and hosted by FAO under his mandate



- **Objectives (choice): a network of regional observatories to build up collective knowledge at global level**
 - Identify the key stakeholders in the region
 - Identify the needs for information in policy making
 - Recognize the plurality of observatories and their complementarities and manage the need of regional focus with the comparative perspective
 - Define what could be the added value of an international coordination mechanism, related to regional networks



Paths

- **Regional level Observatories Dynamics**
 - Costa-Rica with UCR and *Observatorio del Desarrollo*
 - Madagascar with *Réseau des Observatoires Ruraux*
 - South East Asia *AIT and Viet-Nam*
 - West Africa in *Mali with cotton information system and Niger with livestock information system*
 - North Africa *on irrigated agricultures*
- **Research program funded by Cirad linked to these regional dynamics (considered as seed money...)**
- **Draft project note (last version March 2009) for the international initiative through support to regions**



Institutional setting

- **Executive secretariat hosted by FAO**
- **Supported by an expertise from Ministry of Agriculture (France) and by Cirad (in Rome and Montpellier)**
- **Initial funding by IFAD**
- **Pilot project to be finalized**
- **Provisional schedule: January 2010**



- **Thank you for your attention !**
- **There is a slot in the program
“Discussion group” to discuss widely
these issues of “representation” and
“performance” on August 19th, 5:30-7:00**